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[Guest Post] 6 starting tips for the accidental entrepreneur

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Today, *The Journal Blog* features a guest post by Peggy McHale and Sandi Webster, co-founders of [Consultants 2 Go®](#), a multi-million dollar consulting firm that provides marketing and analytic solutions to Fortune 500 and mid-size companies, and authors of the new book **Black and White Strike Gold**, based on their experiences as forced entrepreneurs, starting a small business in tough times.

In a recession-ridden economy, cost-cutting strategies almost become a reflex for many companies and marketing budgets tend to be among the first to get slashed. Program cutting and decreased spending in marketing reduces visibility, sometimes to the point of going silent in the marketplace.

While this may seem like a temporary strategy, the negative impact on your company can have long lasting implications and can compromise your company's position in the marketplace.

Often times, the savvy response to dramatic downturns in business is not to sacrifice marketing efforts but rather to reformulate and reinvigorate them. So, the next time you experience a budget crunch, consider these seven simple tips to not only keep your operations afloat but to make them more efficient and aggressive.

*1. Expect to market **more**, not less, and change the marketing-mix to be sensitive to your budgetary constraints.*

Downturns in the market are golden opportunities for those bold enough to recognize them. Seize the opportunity to gain market share from your competitors that go dark. Reposition your company and your offers to resonate with the new consumer/business mindset, and to improve efficiency, decrease awareness advertising, and focus on direct-response and lead generation tactics.

*2. Leverage **low-cost/no cost channels**.*

Leverage your business's online presence with web-based marketing through your website, and take advantage of email marketing programs and social media networks to accelerate your company's position for little to no cost. Also consider a telesales strategy if your company has none.

*3. **PR plugs can produce a big bang**.*

Establish a protocol for submitting regular press releases whenever your company has a news-worthy event/result to promote. Join public relation pipelines to plug your press releases (PR Web and PR Newswire are two low-cost options). Also seek out contests and award nominations; the press they can generate can often times be worth tens of thousands.

*4. **Network to build relationships, not to simply collect contacts**.*

Networking is not a scavenger hunt where the winner is chosen by the number of business cards collected. It is about **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME**. Volunteer with business groups or philanthropically. Host a lunch or an event of some sort. Focus on trade organizations relevant to your industry – even though it may be expensive to join them, you can still attend their events. Practice your “elevator pitch,” and most importantly, have fun! Even in the toughest of times, networking remains just as critical as in times of expansion.

*5. **Write articles for relevant publications**.*

Here's an obvious but little known secret – publishers (online and print) are always in need of relevant content. Publishing is a low-cost way to garner publicity and gain visibility, and you can hire ghost writers and editors at minimal expense to get the ball rolling. Be sure to post all published materials on your website and forward them to existing and potential clients. Once publishers become aware of your expertise, they will reach out to you in the future.

*6. **Assuming you've updated your marketing plan, create/revise your customer contact plan**.*


Sales are made by establishing credibility, building relationships, and creating a dialogue with existing and prospective clients. Continually keep in touch with your current and past clients, and contact prospective clients. Remember to keep an eye out for competitors, they may be pulling back on advertising and visibility and you may be able to gain new clients and grow market share.

*7. **Assess performance and adapt/adjust your strategies accordingly**.*

This is a fundamental tip that every successful marketing division practices. See which tactics generated the best leads and the most sales, and revise your next campaigns based on the results. You don't want to repeat mistakes and miss out on new methods to improve efficiency that may be uncovered by reassessment.

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